



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to High Commissioner on National Minorities, Rolf Ekeus

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Sharon White
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 3, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes High Commissioner Ekeus back to the Permanent Council today, and wishes to thank him for his excellent report. Commissioner Ekeus, we very much appreciate the excellent work that you and your staff have been doing to address the range of pressing concerns related to national minorities in OSCE participating States.

We strongly support the High Commissioner's continued focus on Central Asia, and his efforts to promote peace and stability in the region through the integration of minorities and the full protection of their internationally recognized human rights. In Kyrgyzstan in particular, we applaud the High Commissioner's engagement and fully share his assessment that the effective participation of national minorities in the forthcoming process of the Constitutional amendments is vital. We hope that the introduction of multi-ethnic policing practices in the police service of Kyrgyzstan will also continue to be promoted.

We also support the High Commissioner's continued efforts in Kazakhstan to implement the Language Development Program and to promote a multilingual education project that provides Uzbek-speaking children the multilingual skills they need to compete successfully for access to higher education. These are excellent examples of strengthening minority participation through education and we welcome the on-going cooperation between the High Commissioner and the Government of Kazakhstan.

We encourage the High Commissioner's continued involvement in assisting governments to develop and implement important legislation, such as Ukraine's draft laws on language and on minorities, and Romania's draft law on the Statute of National Minorities. In Ukraine, we also support his efforts on a project aimed at promoting mutual understanding between the ethnic communities on the Crimean peninsula. We hope that he will be able to increase cooperation with the Government of Ukraine in these areas. In Romania, we praise the government's strong commitment to support national minorities and encourage continued progress, including on protecting the rights of Roma.

Like the Commissioner, the United States welcomes the ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Latvia and Georgia. This is a good opportunity for both governments to demonstrate their support of the principle that there should be no discrimination between different groups of citizens. We support the High Commissioner's continued involvement in both Latvia and Georgia.

The ongoing personal engagement of the High Commissioner in the countries of the former Yugoslavia is of high value to governments seeking to forge more stable relations between

ethnically diverse regions and communities. Ensuring appropriate representation of all ethnicities in the political and judicial spheres is key to this process. In particular, we recognize the High Commissioner's constructive efforts, in close cooperation with the OSCE Mission and other representatives of the international community in Skopje, to assist Macedonian authorities in implementing equitable minority representation in public services in accordance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

In closing, I would like to thank Commissioner Ekeus and his staff once again for upholding the commitment of the OSCE to protect the rights of national minorities, to promote tolerance, and to encourage social integration. To do this across a sphere as large, as diverse, and as complex as ours is no small undertaking. We offer him our full support and wish him continued success in his endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.